

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 07 TEL AVIV 003080

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#). Mideast
- [2](#). Global War on Terrorism

Key stories in the media:

Ha'aretz quoted sources in Jerusalem as saying that First Lady Laura Bush has included Israel in her visit to the region only because President Bush asked her to do so.

Israel Radio quoted State Department Richard Boucher as saying Thursday, "I would note that the Palestinians have a particular responsibility at this time to end the mortar attacks from Gaza, as we proceed to make Israeli withdrawal from Gaza a positive development for both sides. So we're working with them and urging the parties to avoid actions that can escalate tensions.... The goal is to make sure that the Palestinians are in a position to control this area to ensure it's not used to inflame the situation, to make sure that the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and portions of the West Bank contributes to the accelerated progress on the roadmap and contributes to a better life for both Israelis and Palestinians. To do that, we need to end the violence." The radio surmises that the U.S. reminder was the main reason for Israel not responding to the attacks, which have continued through the night. The radio reported on heavy exchanges of fire in the Gaza Strip this morning and on the killing of a terrorist during a combined attack against the settlement of Kfar Darom. The station also said that three Palestinians, one of whom was captured, were wounded in an incident in Nablus. Ha'aretz cited claims by Palestinian eyewitnesses that two Palestinian boys from Beit Lakia who were killed two weeks ago were caught in a deliberate IDF ambush. The army investigation has concluded that the adolescents' death resulted from mistakes.

Ha'aretz and Maariv reported that on Thursday, PM Sharon and Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz approved a series of gestures to the Palestinians over the objections of the Shin Bet and despite the continued barrage of mortar shells in the Gaza Strip -- freeing the next tranche of prisoners, allowing the return of wanted Palestinians deported to Europe following the standoff at Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity in 2002, and allowing the return of Palestinians deported from the West Bank and Gaza. Israel had originally promised to take those steps at the Sharm-el-Sheikh in February. Ha'aretz reported that the U.S. security coordinator, Gen. William Ward, had pressured Israel to take these steps in recent days, which the newspaper says are also related to PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas's planned visit to Washington Thursday.

Jerusalem Post quoted PA officials as saying Thursday that a new Muslim terrorist group linked to al-Qaida has started operating in the Gaza Strip -- Jundallah, or "Allah's Brigades," which reportedly consists mostly of scores of former Hamas and Islamic Jihad members. The newspaper quoted Abu Abdallah al-Khattab, who identifies himself as the spokesman for Jundallah in Thursday, as denying that his group was part of al-Qaida or any other international terror group. Jerusalem Post reported that al-Khattab hinted that his group was also planning to target U.S. interests in the region.

Israel Radio reported that the Construction and Housing

Ministry has officially registered the plan for relocation of settlers in the Nitzanim area.

Former U.S. president Bill Clinton was quoted as saying in an interview with Yediot that Sharon and Abbas are "doing a good job." The interview took place at the Nobel laureates' reunion in Jordan.

Ha'aretz cited an AP dispatch reporting that the PA has decided to ban incendiary sermons from official TV. Jerusalem Post and Hatzofe reported that the PA has removed the anti-Semitic pamphlet "Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion" from one of its official web sites.

Former PM Ehud Barak was quoted as saying in an interview with Ha'aretz that contrary to Sharon's assertions, the U.S. never actually agreed to any agreement according to which Israel's pullout from Gaza would guarantee the future of the large settlement blocs in the West Bank. Barak asserts that Sharon's lies are bound to lead to another round of horrific bloodshed. Leading media reported that Minister-without-Portfolio Matan Vilnai and MK Amir Peretz (who is also the Histadrut Labor Federation's Secretary-General), who are competing for the post of Labor Party chairman, will gang up on Barak next week. Vice Premier Shimon Peres and Infrastructure Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer are also running for Labor chairmanship. Maariv reported that the police will investigate the registration of new Labor Party members, which was found to be tainted by "huge fraud."

Former Shin Bet head Carmi Gillon, who served in that position at the time of the late PM Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, said during a Q&A session on Ha'aretz's web site Thursday, "The consequences [of a far-right attack against the mosques on Jerusalem's Temple Mount] can be a disaster for Israel's existence, and can bring a total war between the Muslim world, Israel, and maybe against Jewish targets abroad."

Ha'aretz quoted EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson, who is currently visiting the region, as saying Thursday that the EU believes Israel's trade agreement with the Palestinians must remain in effect in Gaza even after the disengagement, because any change in the deal would worsen the Palestinians' economic conditions. Jerusalem Post quoted Deputy PM Ehud Olmert as saying that the EU, Jordan and Israel will sign a joint declaration towards the establishment of a trilateral trade accord today during the World Economic Forum in Jordan.

Jerusalem Post quoted Israel Export Institute (IEI) D-G Yehiel Assia as saying Thursday that World Bank President James Wolfensohn agreed last week in Washington to open a contact bureau in Israel, to be operated by the IEI.

Jerusalem Post reported that Hebrew University President Prof. Menachem Meridor and Al-Quds University President Sari Nusseibeh signed a joint statement in London calling for academic cooperation on Thursday. According to Hebrew University, the document's aim was to affirm the continued academic cooperation between the institutions and was a reaction to the academic boycott of Israeli academic institutions by the British Association of University Teachers.

In The Jerusalem Post, Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury, who was publisher and editor of the Bangladeshi magazine Weekly Blitz, tells of 17 months he spent in prison for advocating peace and dialogue with Israel.

Brig. Gil Regev, former chief of the IDF's human resources branch, was quoted as saying in an interview with Yediot that the three MIAs from the Lebanon War's Sultan Yaqub battle, as well as missing IAF navigator Ron Arad, are no longer alive.

All media quoted Finance Minister Binyamin Netanyahu as saying Thursday that he and Sharon agree on the need to lower taxes "to meet growth objectives." On the other hand, taxes on stock exchange earnings will be raised. During the past few days, the media pointed out differences on economic and social goals between the two officials.

Maariv reported that the late U.S. secretary of state Cordell Hull reached a deal with Nazi Germany in 1939 to help Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (the Lubavitcher Rebbe) escape occupied Poland.

A current Maariv/Teleseker poll found that 59 percent of Israelis support Sharon's disengagement plan. (The

figure two weeks ago was 54 percent.)

In a bi-weekly poll conducted in conjunction with Tzav Piyus, an organization advocating domestic peace between secular and religious Israelis, Maariv found that 38 percent of Israelis believe that the chances of people being killed in clashes between disengagement opponents and the security forces are low; 33 percent believe that they are high; 23 percent believe that they are moderate.

I. Mideast:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "It may be assumed that strengthening ties with the 'support bases' among Jews and Evangelical Christians is especially important to [Sharon] in view of possible disagreements with the U.S. administration regarding 'the day after' the withdrawal."

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized: "At this stage, Israel is refraining from properly responding to repeated attacks by Hamas and its factotums."

Senior op-ed writer Rafi Mann opined in popular, pluralist Maariv: "It should only be hoped that Sharon indeed valiantly follows the path that David Ben-Gurion and Menachem Begin ... took before him in similarly difficult hours."

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in Ha'aretz: "Before his delayed visit to Washington, the United States must confront Abu Mazen with a clear choice: a state or a dream; peace or return."

Extreme right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Israel, like every sovereign state, has a right, and indeed a duty to its citizens, to engage in selective immigration policies.... Sadly, in voting to reinstate Palestinian immigration to Israel, our government ministers ... failed to take any of these issues into account."

Block Quotes:

I. "With Us, in the U.S."

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (May 20): "On Saturday night, Sharon will leave for an unusual trip to the United States that will be devoted to the Jewish community. He will not meet with President George Bush, and after some hesitation, no meeting has been set up for him with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. The only 'non-Jewish' event on his schedule will be a meeting with Evangelist Christian leaders who support Israel.... Sharon has two goals in the current visit -- to garner support from the American Jewish leadership for the disengagement plan and to speak about strengthening the ties to Israel. It may be assumed that strengthening ties with the 'support bases' among Jews and Evangelical Christians is especially important to him in view of possible disagreements with the U.S. administration regarding 'the day after' the withdrawal. Someone in Washington might yet urge Israel to rush ahead on the diplomatic track."

II. "Mortars and Qassam Rockets Against the Katif Bloc"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (May 20): "At this stage, Israel is refraining from properly responding to repeated attacks by Hamas and its factotums. It has only responded by air strikes, in a very limited way.... As is well known, Hamas does not recognize the evacuation move of the Katif Bloc 'by peaceful means'.... Thus, it is hard to understand the Prime Minister's policy... He even plans to present easing measures for the Palestinians."

III. "Burning Tires and Flying Stones"

Senior op-ed writer Rafi Mann opined in popular, pluralist Maariv (May 20): "Unlike what some of the supporters of disturbances of public order, in the name of the struggle against government and Knesset decisions, are trying to present, last week's events along Israel's roads and junctions are no 'celebration

of democracy,'. It is amazing and ridiculous to see law-breakers suddenly dressing up as defenders of democracy.... No one should be surprised by the way in which the far Right is now trying to thwart a legal and legitimate decision of the government. It should only be hoped that Sharon indeed valiantly follows the path that David Ben-Gurion and Menachem Begin ... took before him in similarly difficult hours, in order to endure the survival of the democratic regime."

IV. "Return of the Return"

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in Ha'aretz (May 20): "Abu Mazen reached an agreement with Hamas in Cairo in mid-March. The Cairo Declaration included the following dramatic paragraph: 'The participants emphasized their adherence to the Palestinian principles without any concession, as well as the right of the Palestinian nation to resist in order to end the occupation and establish a Palestinian state ... and to guarantee the right of the refugees to return to their homes and their lands.' Why is it dramatic? For two reasons. First, because the declaration states that the Palestinians have a right to exercise violence against Israel until the implementation of the right of return. Second, because the declaration states that the right of return means a return to the actual homes. Not to the Palestinian state.... Since the 1980s, the Palestine Liberation Organization has not used such language.... There is only one way to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian peace: 1948 in exchange for 1967. The right of self-definition in return for a surrender of the right of return. Therefore, before his delayed visit to Washington, the United States must confront Abu Mazen with a clear choice: a state or a dream; peace or return."

1V. "Israel's Immigration Idiocy"

Extreme right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (May 20): "This past Sunday the government approved a change in immigration regulations governing the conferral of Israeli citizenship on Palestinians from Judea, Samaria, and Gaza [i.e. the territories]. From 1993-2003, some 130,000 Palestinians received Israeli citizenship by marrying Israeli Arab citizens. In 2003, after a number of these new citizens were actively involved in terrorism against Israel, the Knesset approved the government's ban of all 'family reunification.' Under the new regulation adopted on Sunday, Palestinian men over the age of 35 and Palestinian women over the age of 25 who marry Israeli citizens can apply again for Israeli citizenship and receive residency rights in Israel.... Israel, like every sovereign state, has a right, and indeed a duty to its citizens, to engage in selective immigration policies based on economic status, political loyalties, security implications, and national origins of prospective immigrants before conferring them with the privilege of Israeli citizenship. Sadly, in voting to reinstate Palestinian immigration to Israel, our government ministers, unlike some of their wiser European counterparts, failed to take any of these issues into account."

12. Global War on Terrorism:

Summary:

Editorial Page Editor Saul Singer wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "The theory that the U.S. can more or less passively reap what it has courageously sown implies that the other side remains static."

Block Quotes:

"The Toppling Business"

Editorial Page Editor Saul Singer wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (May 20): "The U.S. ... cannot afford to bypass Iran even if it were to push democracy more aggressively in place like Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria. Iran poses the most important test for George Bush's foreign policy revolution in another sense: is invasion America's only means to topple rogue regimes? Is America still in the toppling business at all?.... The impression given is that a little patience, the dominoes will continue to fall. This may well be the case. But the theory that the U.S. can more or less passively reap what it has courageously sown implies that the other side remains static. This is hardly the case, given that each

regime will always be more motivated to survive than the U.S. is to topple it.... Bush said, 'When you stand for your liberty, we will stand for you.' In Iran, perhaps soon, we will find out whether he meant in the future and in theory, or now and in practice."

KURTZER